



HUBRIS: Long Term Executive Directors Beware

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Footnotes to this article in *The NATA/NAASE Journal* Winter edition (pages 6-7)

1. In the May 2009 NATA report Turnover in the Field, we found that there were key years when there seemed to be common reasons for executive directors leaving the field: 0-3 years was usually about fit and skills; 7 to 10 years was usually the typical 7 year itch for a better or different position; and after that, our colleagues tended to stay or want to stay until retirement. Levels of contentment went up considerably after 10 years in the position.
2. See *NATA Journal* Spring 2015, "Power versus Service Leadership: the Role of the Executive Director. The Journal can be found on our website: <http://natanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/NATA-Spring-Journal-2015.pdf>. Leading from the Second Chair by Rev. Michael Bonem for a further explanation of this key descriptive term and a more robust definition of the role of the executive director.
3. Examples include Senior Rabbi transitions, difficult presidential transitions, successful capital campaigns and completion of building projects. In the Turnover in the Field report, we learned that our colleagues identified most often changes in rabbinic or lay leadership as a major reason for their decision to move to another position or for why they were terminated from their position. Good personal relationships, including a high level of communication with these key individuals and with other staff, were identified as key to success. Women tended to have a greater level of meaningful communication than men, and men found the transition to a new senior rabbi harder than their female colleagues. Interestingly, older colleagues expressed a greater satisfaction in their work and generally found their jobs to be interesting and rewarding. Overall more mature colleagues are happier and less likely to be thinking of changing positions (over 30% of the 2009 membership was 60 years or older.)
4. See King Lear by William Shakespeare (who wanted his daughters to show their love and ended up blind and abandoned by two of the three daughters) and Oedipus the King by Sophocles (who believes his power is supreme and is ruined)
5. Book of Proverbs, ch. 16-18
6. The Simple Life: The Case against Ostentation in Jewish Life by Hershey H. Friedman. Mr. Friedman explains that the Talmud (Babylonian Talmud, Maakos 24a) states that the prophet Micah (6:8) reduced the Torah to three major principles: "What does the Lord require of you: only to do justice, to love acts of kindness, and to walk discreetly before your God." The Talmud says that 'walking discreetly' before God refers to funerals and weddings; "If in matters that are generally not done in private the Torah says that one should 'walk discreetly,' how much more so in matters that usually call for modesty should certainly be done so." There are many interpretations of this Talmudic statement, the Etz Yosef interprets this as referring to moderation when making funerals and weddings, i.e., one should live a life of moderation and not be ostentatious, even when making funerals and weddings.
7. See "Hubris" in Josephus' Jewish Antiquities, 1-4 by Daniel H. Levine.
8. B'haalot'cha, Numbers ch.12.
9. See Rabbi Louis Jacobs, "Humility in Judaism" www.myjewishlearning.com/article/humility-in-judaism.
10. In the Turnover in the Field report, our members stated that it is important that the synagogue, the lay leadership and the administrator have clear and agreed-upon expectations about what is required to be successful in that congregation. Moreover, colleagues who are treated as professionals and are respected tend stay in their positions. This may mean that colleagues who have longevity have succeeded because they are professional and deserve the respect they receive; it may also suggest that congregations that don't view the administrator as a member of the professional staff may not create an environment that allows for success.